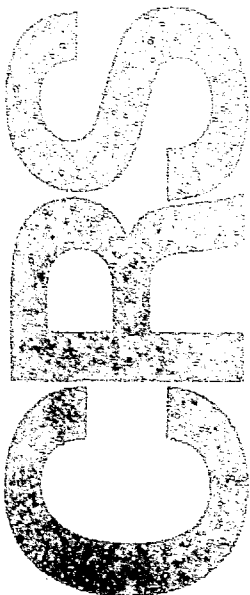

CRS REPORT FOR CONGRESS

AFGHANISTAN PEACE TALKS: AN ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGY AND ANALYSIS
OF THE UNITED NATIONS-SPONSORED NEGOTIATIONS

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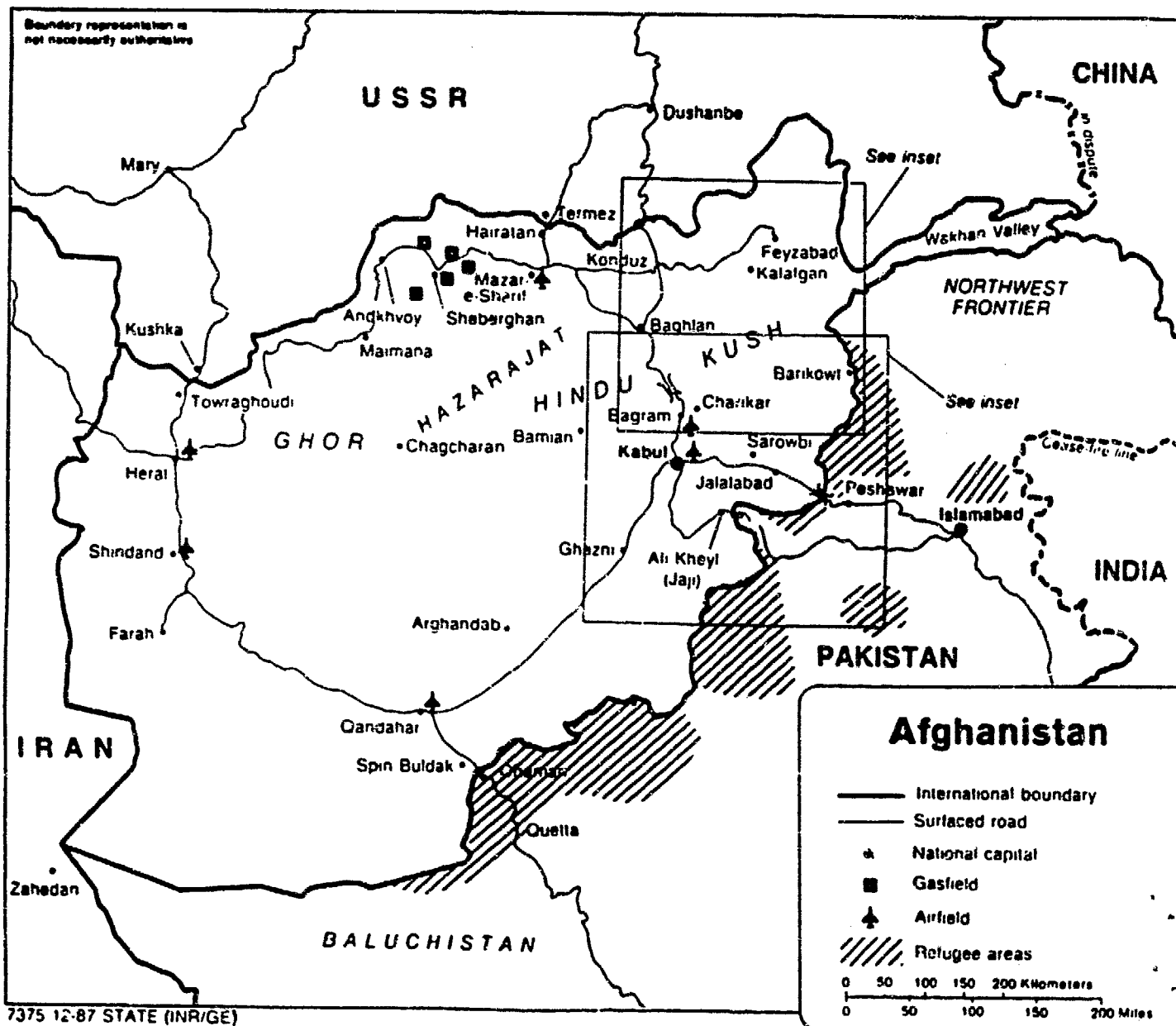
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ABSTRACT

After more than five years of indirect "proximity" negotiations in Geneva under U.N. auspices, Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed upon all aspects of a draft accord except the time frame for the withdrawal of Soviet forces. On February 8, 1988, the Soviet Union announced its willingness to withdraw its troops in 10 months, beginning on May 15, if an accord is reached at Geneva by March 15. For the United States and Pakistan, who remain suspicious of Moscow's intentions, the time frame itself has become less important than arrangements to insure that the Soviets will actually carry out a withdrawal. Indications are that the Geneva talks scheduled to begin March 2, 1988, may prove crucial, but the record of the talks is replete with raised hopes and subsequent disappointments.



Source: U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Public Affairs. Afghanistan: Eight Years of Soviet Occupation. Special Report No. 173. December 1987. p. 2.

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SUMMARY

Since June 1982, eleven rounds of indirect talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan have led to agreement on a draft negotiating text that could provide a framework for a Soviet withdrawal. The talks derived from the second U.N. General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan, that called for the Secretary General to appoint a special representative to seek a settlement based on four points from the U.N. resolution:

- (1) A politically independent and nonaligned Afghanistan;
- (2) The withdrawal of foreign troops;
- (3) Self-determination for Afghanistan without outside interference or subversion; and
- (4) Creating conditions for the return of the refugees "in safety and honor."

Initially the Soviet Union rejected the proposal, but in late 1980 Moscow agreed to cooperate. On February 11, 1981, U.N. Secretary-General Waldheim appointed Under Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar as his "personal representative". In August 1981, following a shuttle mission to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Perez de Cuellar reported to the Secretary-General that Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed on a four point agenda similar to the points in the U.N. resolution.

In September 1981 the initiation of talks was stalled by Kabul's demand for direct government-to-government talks, which Pakistan refused, and by the insistence of Kabul and Moscow that the matter of a Soviet withdrawal was strictly between themselves and could not of itself be part of an accord between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In February 1982, following his elevation to the post of Secretary-General, Perez de Cuellar appointed his deputy, Under Secretary Diego Cordovez, of Ecuador, as his personal representative for Afghanistan. During a visit to Kabul, Islamabad and Teheran in April 1982, Cordovez secured agreement on the beginning of talks.

The first round of talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan took place in Geneva in June 1982. (Iran declined to participate but asked to be kept informed.) The talks were conducted indirectly, with Cordovez shuttling between the representatives sitting in the same building at different times.

The Geneva II round in April 1983 began optimistically, partly as a result of strong hints by Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, conveyed to Pakistan's President Zia ul Haq at the funeral of Leonid Brezhnev, that the Soviets would withdraw "quickly" if Pakistan quickly ceased its support for the Afghan resistance fighters. When talks were suspended on April 22, so that the delegates could consult their governments, Cordovez hinted that considerable progress had been made.

In May 1983, after the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, reportedly conveyed U.S. support for Cordovez's efforts, Cordovez said a draft settlement text was "95 percent" complete. Other press reports suggested disagreement both in Washington and Islamabad over what stance to take on the talks. Following a round of consultations with China, Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, the United States and the U.S.S.R. by Pakistan's foreign minister, Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, Pakistani officials downplayed the prospect of an early settlement.

The reconvened Geneva II talks in June 1983 reportedly found both sides striking hardened postures, including Pakistani insistence on reopening some issues concerning its obligations under "non-interference" and devising

procedures for consulting with the Afghan refugees, and Afghanistan's refusal to discuss a time frame for a Soviet withdrawal.

Although Soviet policy appeared to harden further following the succession of Andropov by Chernenko, Cordovez fleshed out a new negotiating format during an April 1984 shuttle. The revised framework called for an agreement based on four "instruments": (1) "non-interference"; (2) international guarantees; (3) return of the Afghan refugees; and (4) "interrelationships." Most notable was the absence of a heading specifically referring to a Soviet withdrawal. Instead, that issue was to be dealt with under the "interrelationships" instrument.

The Geneva III round in August 1984 was notable for the absence of a Soviet advisor to the Afghan side, a possible factor in the absence of significant developments.

The Geneva IV round, In June 1985, was preceded by a shuttle to the region by Cordovez and separate talks in Washington between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy and Yuli Alekseyev of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, in which both sides reportedly reiterated their known positions. The Geneva IV round led to substantial agreement on "non-interference," international guarantees and the return of the refugees, with only the final interrelationships instrument to be settled. Reportedly, Pakistan insisted on simultaneity in implementation of all parts of the agreement, while Kabul insisted on consecutive actions beginning with "non-interference" and international guarantees.

The Geneva V round, which took place in August 1985, began with renewed effort by Kabul to secure face-to-face talks, without success. The talks ended with familiar expressions of satisfaction, but apparent deadlock on procedural issues. During a November 11, 1985, address to the U.N. General Assembly, Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan criticized the Soviet-Afghan

side for demanding a different format (direct talks) for negotiating a Soviet withdrawal from that which had sufficed to negotiate the other aspects.

Following the November 1985 Reagan-Gorbachev summit, the U.S. appeared to take a more positive attitude towards the UN-sponsored talks. In a letter delivered to the UN Secretary-General, delivered to Cordovez on December 10, the U.S. government expressed its willingness in principle to be a guarantor "provided that the central issue of Soviet troop withdrawal and its interrelationship to the other instruments were resolved."

The Geneva VI talks in December 1985 ended a day early due to a continuing impasse over the negotiating format. The Afghans claimed to have a withdrawal time table that could be discussed if Pakistan would agree to direct talks.

In a February 1986 speech to the 27th Party Congress, Soviet leader Gorbachev stated his desire to withdraw Soviet forces "in the nearest future" and that he "had agreed with the Afghan side on the schedule for their phased withdrawal as soon as political settlement is reached that insures an actual cessation and dependably guarantees the non-resumption of foreign interference."

Four separate rounds of talks were held under the title Geneva VII. The first May 1986 round was preceded by the replacement of Afghan leader Babrak Karmal by Najibullah, head of the secret police. The May 1986 talks achieved some narrowing of differences, but left a wide gap on the question of a withdrawal timetable. Reportedly, the Afghans insisted on 3-4 years, while Pakistan insisted on six months or less.

The July-August 1986 round of Geneva VII failed to yield progress on the critical issues: the time frame for a Soviet withdrawal and measures for monitoring and verifying compliance with an agreement. During a November 1986

shuttle, however, Cordovez claimed to have obtained agreement on the second issue, leaving only the time frame to be settled.

The February-March 1987 round followed unilateral cease fire and "national reconciliation" initiatives by the Kabul government, and amidst serious fighting within Afghanistan and cross-border air attacks on Pakistani territory. A new feature of the military situation was the appearance of U.S. made "Stinger" anti-aircraft missiles. In the course of the talks, differences on a time frame for a Soviet withdrawal narrowed to less than one year, with Kabul calling for 18 months and Pakistan insisting on seven months.

The fourth, September 1987 round of Geneva VII was held at the unprecedented request of the Soviet and Afghan governments. Contrary to expectations, however, the Kabul negotiators failed to offer a 12 month timetable for a Soviet withdrawal, but lowered the figure slightly to 16 months while Pakistan raised its offer to eight months.

In late 1987 and early 1988, the Soviet leaders made a series of progressively less qualified declarations of their intention to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan, while the United States and Pakistan appeared uncertain as to how best to test the sincerity of Moscow's declarations. A White House spokesman first indicated that a cutoff of aid to the Afghan resistance under an accord would be a phased one, but subsequently stated that an aid cutoff and the beginning of a Soviet withdrawal could occur "at essentially the same time." Secretary of State Shultz called for "front-end loading" a Soviet withdrawal so that combat forces left first.

Meanwhile, in January 1988, President Zia of Pakistan reiterated his call for an international peacekeeping force to supervise a Soviet withdrawal, and urged the Afghan resistance leaders to be flexible about the idea of a coalition government. Zia said he would not sign an accord with President Najibullah of Afghanistan, but rather insisted on the necessity of a transition

government including the Afghan resistance, Afghan exiles and possibly some figures from the current regime, as necessary to obtain the voluntary return of the refugees to Afghanistan.

On February 8, 1988, Moscow offered to withdraw its forces in 10 months, beginning May 15, 1988, if an accord is signed at Geneva by March 15. The Soviets now indicate that they have no objection to pulling out the bulk of their forces early. In a significant policy switch, given past Soviet stress on the need to form a government of "national reconciliation" around the present regime, Gorbachev declared on February 8, 1988, that a withdrawal would not depend on reaching an internal political settlement.

On February 9, the U.N. negotiator announced after a 21-day shuttle to the region that the talks would reconvene in Geneva on March 2, 1988.

ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGY AND ANALYSIS*

Origins of the U.N. Sponsored Negotiations

The U.N. sponsored negotiations on Afghanistan derived from the second U.N. General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan of November 20, 1980, which included a provision drafted and promoted by Pakistan calling for all parties to work towards a political settlement. The resolution specifically expressed the hope that the Secretary-General would appoint a special representative to promote a settlement in accordance with the U.N. resolution, and explore the securing of appropriate guarantees for the non-use of force or threats of force against neighboring states, on the basis of mutual guarantees and strict non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Although the Soviet Union formally rejected this and all similar U.N. resolutions as an intrusion into Afghanistan's internal affairs and an infringement on its bilateral relations with the Kabul regime, Moscow subsequently cooperated with and even encouraged the Secretary-General's efforts to promote a settlement. Since early 1986, Moscow has publicly professed its desire to use the U.N. talks to achieve a negotiated withdrawal of its forces.

*This report is an update of an earlier CRS report, published in July 1986. Margaret Holly Isdale, a student intern in the Cornell-in-Washington program, assisted in compiling the original. Ajay Gupta assisted in the production of the present report.

Inception of the Negotiations¹

The negotiations began in mid-1982 only after months of maneuvering by Pakistan, on the one side, and the Soviet Union and Afghanistan on the other. Issues included the role of the U.N. representative, the status of the Afghan delegation, and procedural issues concerning the character of the talks themselves.

Pakistan took the lead in urging the Secretary-General to follow up on the U.N. resolution of November 1980 and appoint a special representative. It favored trilateral talks involving Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, with Kabul's delegates representing only the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Pakistan argued that talks should be based on four points from the U.N. resolution:

- (1) A politically independent and nonaligned Afghanistan;
- (2) The withdrawal of foreign troops;
- (3) Self-determination for Afghanistan without outside interference or subversion; and
- (4) Creating conditions for the return of the refugees "in safety and honor."²

¹This section is constructed from a number of sources, including: Kaufman, Michael T. Afghanistan and Pakistan Report Progress Toward Beginning Talks. New York Times, Jan. 7, 1981. p. 4; Nossiter, Bernard D. Afghan Peace Moves: Mixed Motives. New York Times, Feb. 5, 1981. p. A3; Ali, Salamat. Afghanistan: Diplomats in Deadlock. Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), Feb. 13, 1981. p. 20-21; Ram, Mohan. Moscow in the Firing Line. FEER, Feb. 20, 1981. p. 8-9. Auerbach, Stuart. Waldheim Appoints Aide to Initiate Negotiations on Afghan Intervention. Washington Post, Feb. 12, 1981. p. A29; Morello, Ted. Sweet and Sour Diplomacy. FEER, Aug. 28, 1981. p. 31; Morello, Ted. Trench Diplomacy. FEER, Oct. 9, 1981. p. 31.

²Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), Feb. 13, 1981: p. 20.

Pakistan pushed for the negotiations in other forums such as the Islamic Conference and the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) and secured the backing of its Islamic allies and China. Foreign Minister Agha Shahi specifically flew to Beijing to explain Pakistan's approach and, presumably, secure Chinese assent to talks involving Kabul's representatives.³ As of early 1981, the United States was not a factor of visible prominence.

During late 1980 and early 1981, Moscow sent mixed signals about the proposed talks. While giving indications of support for negotiations, the Soviets preferred a minimal role for the United Nations and wanted recognition of Kabul as a basic principle. The Kabul regime apparently opposed any internationalization of the talks and wanted to deal with Iran and Pakistan on a strictly bilateral, government-to-government basis.

In late 1980, however, the Soviets apparently decided that a forthcoming posture on negotiations would lessen the international political damage from their continued occupation of Afghanistan. In December 1980, on the eve of President Brezhnev's visit to New Delhi, the Soviet Ambassador told Pakistan that Kabul was prepared to talk without mentioning recognition as a precondition. The Soviets reportedly also informed U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim of their support for talks.⁴

Appointment of U.N. Negotiator

On February 11, 1981, U.N. Secretary-General Waldheim appointed Under Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar as his "personal representative" following separate discussions with the foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan at the New Delhi Nonaligned foreign ministers meeting. (In deference

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 20-21.

to Moscow's rejection of the U.N. resolution on Afghanistan, he was not titled a "special representative" as had been called for in that resolution.) The immediate prospects for talks looked dim. Pakistan urged that Perez de Cuellar visit the "concerned capitals" to iron out procedural obstacles.⁵

Initial Response of the Parties

The prospects for negotiations brightened after two visits to Islamabad and Kabul by Perez de Cuellar in April and August 1981. On August 24, 1981, following a European Economic Community (EEC) peace initiative sponsored by Lord Carrington and preceding the annual fall U.N. debate on Afghanistan, the Kabul government indicated to Pakistan that it no longer insisted on strictly bilateral talks and implied that it would accept a larger U.N. role. Likewise, the Afghan foreign minister, Shah Mohammad Dost, told Indian Prime Minister Gandhi during a visit to New Delhi that Kabul was "flexible" concerning procedural matters.⁶

In August, following his return from a shuttle mission to the region, Perez de Cuellar reported to the U.N. Secretary-General that Pakistan and Afghanistan had reached agreement on a four-point agenda:

- (1) The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan;
- (2) Pledges of non-interference in each other's internal affairs by both Pakistan and Afghanistan;
- (3) International guarantees concerning non-interference (reportedly involving the Soviet Union, China, and the United States); and
- (4) The return of the refugees.⁷

⁵Washington Post, Feb. 16, 1981.

⁶Kaufman, Michael T. Afghan Official, in India, Espouses New Flexibility. New York Times, Sept. 8, 1981. p. A13.

⁷FEER, Aug. 28, 1981. p. 31

The achievement of this understanding was followed by indirect talks at the U.N. headquarters, which broke up on September 28, 1981, without any progress. At the time Dost, the Afghan foreign minister, criticized what he charged was a growing U.S. role in supplying arms to the Afghan resistance. He claimed that Afghanistan was ready for either bilateral or trilateral talks, but stressed again Kabul's insistence that the talks be direct government-to-government negotiations. Perhaps more important, he staked out the Soviet-Afghan position that an accord with Pakistan would only constitute "'an opportunity to determine by agreement' between Afghanistan and the U.S.S.R. the timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops." [Emphasis added.]⁸

Some reporting suggests that Pakistan also hardened its position, allegedly under American influence, and surprised Waldheim with its refusal to talk directly to Kabul's delegation even as representatives of the ruling party. At this point, it was reported, Waldheim deemed the meetings pointless and called them off.⁹

Appointment of Diego Cordovez as U.N. Negotiator

The election of Perez de Cuellar to the post of U.N. Secretary-General resulted in the February 1982 appointment of Under Secretary Diego Cordovez, of Ecuador, as his personal representative for Afghanistan. Cordovez visited Kabul, Islamabad, and Teheran in April 1982. The visit to Teheran marked the first time Iran had agreed to receive a United Nations negotiator.¹⁰

⁸FEER, October 9, 1981. p. 31.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰FEER, April 16, 1982: p. 7.

Geneva I -- June 1982 Round

The first round of the Geneva talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan finally began in mid-June 1982. (Iran refused to participate but asked to be kept informed.) The talks were "indirect," in that Cordovez met with the delegates from Pakistan and Afghanistan sitting in the same building at different times. Without giving details, it was reported that "Mr. Cordovez said that the two countries had made important concessions and that he planned to visit Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran this fall with the broad outline of an agreement."¹¹

The Andropov Succession: Conflicting Signals

Following Brezhnev's death, the Soviets sent conflicting signals about their approach to the Afghanistan situation. At Brezhnev's funeral in December 1982, Yuri Andropov reportedly told Pakistan's President Zia that the Soviet Union wanted to get out of Afghanistan and would leave "quickly" if Pakistan quickly ceased its support of the resistance. Subsequent official Soviet media statements, however, appeared deliberately calculated to refute Zia's optimistic assessment. U.N. officials, especially Diego Cordovez, reportedly saw a "window for diplomacy."¹²

Cordovez undertook a shuttle to Teheran, Kabul, and Islamabad between January 21 and February 7, during which he presented a working draft of an

¹¹Gwertzman, Bernard. Joint Talks Held on Afghan Dispute. New York Times, July 24, 1982. p. 3.

¹²Nations, Richard. Moscow's Funeral Diplomacy. FEER, Dec. 24, 1982. p. 20; Doder, Dusko. Soviets Shift Stand on Pulling Troops From Afghanistan. Washington Post, Dec. 17, 1982. p. A32; Moscow Affirms Its Afghan Policy. New York Times, Dec. 17, 1982. p. A3.

agreement.¹³ In March 1983, Cordovez and Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar met with Soviet leaders Yuri Andropov and Andrei Gromyko in Moscow and secured assurances of support for the talks.

Geneva II -- April 1983 Round

The second Geneva round began on April 8, 1983, and lasted until April 22, when the talks were adjourned to allow the negotiators to consult with their governments. While few details were reported, the overall impression from statements of Cordovez and others was that considerable progress had been made in fleshing out the annotated working draft of a comprehensive settlement.

Crucial Interval

Speculation about the prospects for the talks heightened considerably in May 1983. Following discussions with U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, in which she reportedly conveyed U.S. support for his mission, Cordovez told the press that "95 percent of the text of the draft comprehensive settlement was ready" and that "among other elements the text envisages the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan." [Emphasis added.] Among other things yet to be settled, according to Cordovez, were "arrangements to ascertain the voluntary character of the return of the refugees and to identify guarantors of the agreement." He said: "I have some informal indications that the Soviet Union, the United States and China will be ready to guarantee the agreement when they have examined the text."¹⁴

¹³The Muslim (Islamabad), Feb. 11, 1983. p. 1.

¹⁴Ibid, May 12, 1983. p. 1.

Especially because of Cordovez's optimistic statements, an atmosphere of expectation arose. Reportedly, the Soviets had indicated to both Cordovez and Pakistan's new Foreign Minister, Yaqub Khan, that they were prepared to undertake a phased withdrawal if Pakistan would commit itself to cutting off arms to the Afghan resistance forces. A seemingly well-informed but controversial article by Selig Harrison suggested that peace was within reach and that the attitude of the United States was crucial.¹⁵

Beginning with a visit to Beijing, Yaqub Khan consulted with the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (Britain, France, China, the United States, and the U.S.S.R.) and the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Saudi Arabia) prior to returning to the Geneva talks. U.S. officials conveyed their views on the negotiations to Yaqub Khan during his visit to Washington on May 25. The expectation of possible movement in the talks reportedly generated disagreement both in Washington and in Islamabad over what stance to take, with "hardliners" in both capitals being skeptical and others being more inclined to test Soviet intentions.¹⁶

On the eve of the June 1983 round, Pakistani officials downplayed the prospect of an early settlement based on a Soviet withdrawal. Yaqub Khan termed his discussions in Moscow with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in early June as "most fruitful," but dismissed the possibility of any spectacular breakthrough, and termed the path to a settlement as complicated and difficult.¹⁷

¹⁵Harrison, Selig S. A Breakthrough in Afghanistan? Foreign Policy, Summer 1983. p. 3-27. See also, Harrison, Selig S. Nearing a Pullout From Afghanistan. New York Times, June 7, 1983. p. 27.

¹⁶Washington Times. June 15, 1983. p. 7.

¹⁷Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). Daily Report. South Asia, June 6, 1983. p. F2; Ibid., June 15, 1983. p. F1.

Geneva II (Continued) -- June 1983 Round

The continuation of the Geneva II talks during June 16-25, 1983, found both sides striking hardened postures. Pakistan, which had long stressed the importance of a comprehensive agreement, reportedly balked at accepting any part of the agreement as final until all other parts were in place, and sought to reopen discussion on clauses concerning "non-interference."¹⁸ Pakistan also raised the issue of devising a mechanism for consulting the refugees pursuant to agreement on language dealing with their return to Afghanistan.¹⁹ The Soviets, for their part, would not agree to discuss (through the Afghan representatives) a specific timetable for withdrawing their troops. The Afghan delegation reportedly concentrated on pinning down "watertight" commitments by Pakistan regarding "non-interference," i.e., foreclosing outside aid to the resistance forces.²⁰

The apparent accomplishments of the talks were few. The parties agreed that the U.N. negotiator could initiate "preliminary consultations" with Moscow and Washington regarding their willingness to act as guarantors of a settlement.²¹ An understanding was also reached that, in some fashion, the

¹⁸Harrison, Selig. Are We Fighting to the Last Afghan? Washington Post, Dec. 29, 1983. p. A17; Darnton, John. Afghan Talks End Without Progress. New York Times, June 25, 1983. p. A17; FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia, June 20, 1983. p. F1.

¹⁹New York Times, June 25, 1983. p. A17; FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia, June 20, 1983. p. F1.

²⁰Harrison, Are We Fighting, p. A17; Danton, Afghan Talks End, p. A17. A cryptic account of the developments between April and June 1983, couched in highly cautious diplomatic language, is contained in United Nations. Secretary-General. The Situation in Afghanistan and Its Implications for International Peace and Security. Report of the Secretary General. [New York] United Nations, October 7, 1985. para. 4. (United Nations [Document] A/40/709: S/17527.)

²¹New York Times, June 25, 1983: A17.

United Nations would seek to find a mutually acceptable framework for consulting with the refugees at an early date.

Despite expressions of interest in the talks by all parties, Perez de Cuellar decided to cancel a proposed September 1983 visit to the region by Cordovez on grounds that the nature of the deadlock did not offer much hope of early resolution.²²

During the fall session of the United Nations, during which the Afghanistan resolution passed for the fifth time and by a larger margin than before (116 to 20 with 17 abstentions), U.N. officials continued informal discussions with the parties to the talks. In November 1983, the U.N. announced that Cordovez would resume his shuttle mission at a time agreeable to the parties.

April 1984 Shuttle -- A New Negotiating Format

Diego Cordovez visited Teheran, Kabul, and Islamabad in early April 1984 in an effort to get the talks started again. In the interim, Andropov had been succeeded by Chernenko, and Soviet policy appeared to have hardened.²³ As reported later, Cordovez obtained agreement on a "proximity" format for the talks that involved alternately conferring with the parties sitting simultaneously in adjacent rooms. More important, Cordovez also reshaped the framework for the negotiations to one that involved four "instruments": 1) "non-interference"; 2) international guarantees; 3) return of the Afghan refugees; and 4) "interrelationships." Notably, these did not include a

²²U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Public Affairs. Afghanistan: Four Years of Occupation. Special Report No. 112. December 1983.

²³At Brezhnev's funeral, Andropov courted Zia and reportedly shunned Karmal, whereas at Andropov's funeral, "Chernenko gave Zia the cold shoulder, and granted a long audience to Karmal." Fullerton, Romey. Cordovez Starts Over. FEER, April 12, 1984. p. 12-13.

heading specifically referring to the withdrawal of foreign forces, as had been part of the earlier four-chapter "comprehensive settlement" draft.²⁴

The August 1984 round was preceded by indications of a further effort by Cordovez to change fundamentally the negotiating format. As reported by Radio Karachi, Cordovez suggested that an accord on mutual non-interference would create a climate of confidence regarding a comprehensive settlement. That formulation would by implication have further separated a Soviet troop withdrawal from Pakistan's commitment to halt aid to the resistance. Cordovez also suggested that deteriorating relations between the United States and the U.S.S.R. created obstacles to a comprehensive accord.²⁵

Geneva III -- August 1984 Round

The Geneva III round, which began on August 24 and ended on August 30, 1984, did not achieve any apparent progress on fundamental issues. The round was noteworthy for the absence, for the first time, of any Soviet advisor to the Afghan side -- a development which some saw as foreclosing any possibility of significant movement in the Afghan position.²⁶

The talks took place following a major Soviet offensive in the strategic Panjsher Valley and amidst Pakistan's complaints of extensive violations of its border and attacks across the frontier by aircraft from Afghanistan.²⁷ Apparently, the only reportable progress was that the Afghan and Pakistani negotiators agreed that provisions concerning non-interference and

²⁴United Nations Envoy Changes Format of Afghan Talks. FEER, June 21, 1984. p. 10; United Nations Representative on Upcoming Mediation Effort. FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia, Aug. 21, 1984. p. C1.

²⁵FBIS. Aug. 21, 1984, p. C1.

²⁶Foreign Report (The Economist), Sept. 13, 1984. p. F1.

²⁷FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia, Aug. 29, 1984. p. F1.

non-intervention in each other's internal affairs would be included in a bilateral agreement (as one of the four "instruments").²⁸

Following the talks, Pakistan's foreign minister reiterated two points: the necessity of a time frame for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the creation of a mechanism under U.N. auspices for consulting with the refugees before concluding a settlement. Publicly, both Afghanistan and Pakistan expressed satisfaction with the third round and agreed to continue the indirect discussions.²⁹

Geneva IV -- June 1985 Round

The fourth round of the Geneva talks took place in late June, 1985, in the wake of a shuttle mission to the region by Cordovez earlier in the month. In the course of the shuttle, which lasted from May 25 to 31, 1985, the Afghans and Pakistanis reportedly had agreed that the settlement should consist of the following:

- (1) "a bilateral agreement on non-interference and non-intervention;"
- (2) "a declaration (or declarations) on international guarantees;"
- (3) "a bilateral agreement on the voluntary return of the refugees; and"
- (4) "an instrument that would set out the interrelationships between the aforementioned instruments and the solution of the question of the withdrawal of foreign troops in accordance with an agreement to be concluded between Afghanistan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."³⁰

²⁸United Nations, Report, Oct. 1985, para 6, p. 2.

²⁹FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia, Aug. 28, 1984. p. F2; Sept. 19, 1984. p. F6.

³⁰United Nations, Report, Oct. 1985, para. 9, pp. 2-3.

Two days before the talks opened, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Richard W. Murphy, met in Washington with Yuli Alekseyev, the Chief of the Middle Eastern Department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry and Oleg Sokolov, second ranking official at the Soviet Embassy in Washington. Reportedly, the talks on Afghanistan were "frank and businesslike," but both sides only reiterated past positions.³¹

The Geneva talks held during June 20 and 25, ended with Cordovez being quoted as speaking "carefully and positively about the end of the 'deadlock' which had prevailed since 1983," implying "that an important advance had been made in drafting the document which could become the basis for a comprehensive settlement, if more powerful factors permit."³² The Secretary-General subsequently reported that the instruments on "non-interference and non-intervention," international guarantees and the return of the refugees essentially had been settled, with only the instrument on "interrelationships," which would link the Soviet withdrawal to Pakistan's commitment to restrain Afghan resistance activity emanating from its soil, yet to be completed. That instrument was not discussed during the round. The instrument on the return of the refugees remained incomplete pending a determination that "the arrangements for the return of the refugees are satisfactory to them."³³

Reportedly, the major obstacle to taking up the fourth instrument was the insistence of the Afghans on consecutive actions beginning with the "non-interference" and international guarantees. A withdrawal of Soviet forces was

³¹Lee, Gary. U.S. Presses for End to Afghan War. Washington Post, June 22, 1985. p. A16.

³²Lifshultz, Lawrence. Afghanistan: The Choice Ahead. The Muslim (Islamabad), Aug. 5, 1985. (1st of 2 part series.) p. 1.

³³United Nations, Report, Oct. 1985, para. 10, p. 3.

to follow at an unspecified time. Pakistan, on the other hand, reportedly insisted that all aspects of a settlement must begin simultaneously and under a specific time frame for a Soviet withdrawal.³⁴

Following the talks, Pakistan's foreign minister, Yaqub Khan, was subjected to some criticism at home for indicating that Islamabad would consider talking directly to Kabul at the "appropriate time," and for expressing willingness to discuss other aspects of a settlement in the absence of readiness of the other party to discuss a withdrawal of Soviet forces. An official clarification stated that the issue of direct talks was "premature," but that "at the appropriate time and in light of appropriate developments, direct talks could be considered."³⁵

Geneva V -- August 1985 Round

The fifth Geneva round, which took place between August 26 and 30, 1985, began with lower expectations than had been indicated at the end of the June round. On August 21, before departing New York for Geneva, Cordovez reportedly declared that the impending talks would "at best, constitute a 'holding operation.'"³⁶

Geneva V opened with the most forceful attempt to date by the Afghans to get face-to-face negotiations. Pakistan refused. After two days of deadlock, the previous formula was reverted to in which Cordovez shuttled between the ministers sitting in separate offices in the U.N. Geneva headquarters.³⁷

³⁴Ibid.; and FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia, June 26, 1985. p. F1.

³⁵Karachi Dawn, July 3, 1985: 8; FBIS Daily Report, South Asia. July 10, 1985: F1.

³⁶The Muslim (Islamabad), Aug. 22, 1985. p. 1.

³⁷Parry, John. Afghan Talks Said to Advance. Washington Post, Aug. 31, 1985. p. A28.

The talks ended with the now familiar expressions of satisfaction, but the basic procedural impasse remained. Cordovez said that the instrument on "non-interference" was "virtually completed," and that he had received satisfactory responses from the United States and the Soviet Union concerning international guarantees. (One reply, which he would not identify, was "extremely detailed.")³⁸ Cordovez also said that an agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan to repatriate the Afghan refugees might be completed in December.³⁹ According to the U.N. Secretary-General, the impasse over Afghanistan's demand for direct talks prevented consideration of the fourth, interrelationships instrument.⁴⁰

U.N. General Assembly Resolution

Pakistan gained renewed support for its position on November 13, 1985, when the U.N. General Assembly reaffirmed by an increased margin (122-19 with 12 abstentions) a Pakistani drafted resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. The Geneva talks figured prominently in the debate, with Soviet, Soviet-bloc and Afghan delegates calling for direct talks to resolve the issue. In a November 11, 1985, address at the start of the U.N. debate, Yaqub Khan, argued that "Three of the four instruments have been completed through indirect talks, ... and it defies reason to insist that the fourth instrument should be negotiated through a changed format." He charged that the demand "betrays Kabul's political motives and is aimed at gaining

³⁸Ibid. It was later reported that the United States had declined to comment substantively on the draft non-interference instrument and provisions for guaranteeing a settlement until the Soviets provide a timetable for withdrawing their forces. Berlin, Michael. U.N. Urges 122-19, Pullout from Kabul. Washington Post. November 14, 1985. p. A37.

³⁹Washington Post, Aug. 31, 1985. p. A28.

⁴⁰United Nations, Report, Oct. 1985, para. 12, p. 3.

acceptance and legitimacy through the Geneva process without delivering on, or even discussing the critical aspect of withdrawals."⁴¹

Conditional U.S. Acceptance of Guarantor's Role

Following the November 1985 Reagan-Gorbachev summit, in which the Soviet leader reportedly took a non-confrontational position on the Afghan issue, the Reagan Administration adopted a more forthcoming public position on the Geneva talks. In a letter to the U.N. Secretary General, presented to Cordovez on December 10, the U.S. Government expressed its willingness in principle to be a guarantor. In a speech to a world affairs group on December 13, Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead announced that the United States had informed the Secretary-General in writing of its "willingness to play an appropriate guarantor's role in the context of a comprehensive and balanced settlement. We have conveyed our readiness to accept the draft instrument that Mr. Cordovez has presented to the parties and to us, provided that the central issue of Soviet troop withdrawal and its interrelationship to the other instruments were resolved."⁴²

Geneva VI -- December 1985 Round

The Geneva VI talks took place between December 16 and 19, 1985. The U.N. negotiator suspended them a day early in the face of a continuing impasse over the negotiating format. The Afghan side again insisted on face-to-face talks as a price for continuing the negotiations. This time the Afghans reportedly

⁴¹The Muslim (Islamabad), Nov. 12, 1985. p. 1.

⁴²Shipler, David K. U.S. Offers to Be Guarantor of an Accord in Afghanistan. New York Times, Dec. 14, 1985. pp. 1, 32; FEER, Jan. 2, 1986. p. 8.

gave Cordovez a withdrawal timetable that could be discussed if Pakistan agreed to negotiate directly. Pakistan refused on grounds that this would represent recognition of the Soviet-installed regime.⁴³

Despite the early suspension of the talks some forward movement was reported. This included the willingness of the Afghan side to discuss a withdrawal timetable and some substantive discussion about what should be in the fourth "instrument." Cordovez also counted as progress the fact that the United States had indicated its willingness to guarantee a settlement.⁴⁴

Interim Developments

Gorbachev's 27th Party Congress Speech. In a speech to the 27th party congress in February 1986 Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev emphasized both Moscow's support for the efforts of the Kabul regime to "defend its sovereignty" and a desire "in the nearest future, to withdraw the soviet (sic) troops stationed in Afghanistan at the request of its Government." The Soviet Union, he said, "had agreed with the Afghan side on the schedule for their phased withdrawal as soon as a political settlement is reached that insures an actual cessation and dependably guarantees the non-resumption of foreign interference" in Afghanistan.⁴⁵

Cordovez's March 1986 Shuttle. After a March 1986 shuttle to Moscow, Kabul (two visits) and Islamabad, Diego Cordovez announced that the Afghan authorities had given him a document containing a timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Although he had not yet received an answer from Kabul and

⁴³Pakistan Disclaims Seeing Troop Pullout Schedule. Washington Post, Jan. 3, 1986. p. A24.

⁴⁴Karachi Radio, Dec. 20, 1985 (FBIS Daily Report. South Asia, Dec. 23, 1985. p. F1); The Muslim (Islamabad), Dec. 20, 21, and 22, 1985. p. 1.

⁴⁵New York Times, Feb. 26, 1986: A11.

Islamabad about his proposal for a new negotiating format to remove the impasse in the talks, "he now had all the elements of a comprehensive settlement of the Afghan problem."⁴⁶

Later reports indicated that the parties remained far apart on the issue of a time frame for a Soviet withdrawal. The format issue appeared to be resolved temporarily, however, with Kabul reportedly agreeing that the talks could be kept indirect until the time for actually signing an agreement and negotiating its implementation.⁴⁷

Replacement of Babrak Karmal. On May 4, 1986, on the eve of the Geneva VII round, Babrak Karmal was abruptly replaced as General Secretary of the PDPA by the head of the Afghan secret police, Lt. Gen. Mohammad Najibullah. While Karmal's replacement appeared nominally to address one Pakistani objection to direct talks, Najibullah hardly represented a more "legitimate" leader. His reputation as an efficient functionary with long ties to the Soviet secret police created doubts about Moscow's intentions. Some analysts saw the change as a concession aimed at making the regime more acceptable to Pakistan. Others saw the move as clearing the way for a more effective prosecution of the war against the resistance and the consolidation of the regime, either outside the U.N. negotiations framework or in concert with a new diplomatic effort toward obtaining a settlement on Soviet terms.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Tokyo KYODO in English, FBIS. Daily Report. South Asia. March 18, 1986. p. C1.

⁴⁷Rupert, James. Afghan Peace Talks to Resume. Washington Post, May 5, 1986. p. A21, 24.

⁴⁸See for instance: Thatcher, Gary. Replacement of Afghanistan's Leader Linked to Peace Talks. The Christian Science Monitor, May 6, 1986. p. 15; Lee, Gary. Soviets Seen in Changed Afghan Role. Washington Post, May 7, 1986. p. A32, 38; and Nations, Richard. Gorbachev's Game Plan: Moscow Wants to Prop Up Kabul Despite Troop Pullout. FEER, Jul. 3, 1986. p. 14-15.

Geneva VII -- May 1986 Round

The Geneva VII round which began on May 19 and was suspended on May 23, 1986, achieved some narrowing of differences, but left a wide gap on the question of a withdrawal timetable. The talks took place against a background of intensified Soviet military pressure on Afghan resistance strongholds near the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier, attacks on resistance bases on the Pakistani side of the border by aircraft from Afghanistan, and an air engagement in which two Pakistani F-16's reportedly shot down two intruding Soviet-made SU-22 ground attack aircraft. Reportedly, the talks took place in a less confrontational atmosphere -- Kabul having dropped its demand for direct talks at this stage.

For the first time, the talks included consideration of the interrelationships instrument.⁴⁹ By all accounts the parties remained far apart on key issues of the timetable for a Soviet troop withdrawal and the relationship of a withdrawal to the other parts of the agreement. With regard to a withdrawal time frame, the Afghan side reportedly was still talking in terms of 3-4 years, while Pakistan held out for six months or less⁵⁰. Points resolved were said to include agreement that "the final document will be legally binding, signed by the two foreign ministers, and enforced by an international monitoring team composed of representatives of mutually acceptable countries."⁵¹ According to the same report Kabul also accepted that

⁴⁹United Nations. Secretary-General. The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security. Report of the Secretary-General. [New York] United Nations, Sept. 18, 1986. para. 7, p. 2 (United Nations [Document] A/41/619: S/18347.

⁵⁰The Muslim (Islamabad), May 24, 1986. p. 1.

⁵¹Nations, Richard. Gorbachev's Game Plan, FEER, Jul. 3, 1986: p. 14.

the end of "interference" and a phased Soviet withdrawal would begin simultaneously.⁵²

Gorbachev's Vladivostok Speech and Alleged Withdrawal Deception

In an important Asian policy speech in Vladivostok on July 28, 1986, Soviet leader Gorbachev promised to withdraw six regiments (about 6-7,000 men) permanently from Afghanistan by the end of 1986. According to U.S. intelligence agencies, three air defense units, which were superfluous, were withdrawn in October 1986, but a tank regiment that was paraded through Kabul on October 15 and withdrawn with fanfare had only been brought up to strength with equipment from the U.S.S.R. during the previous month. Likewise, U.S. officials say two motorized rifle regiments withdrawn in October had been rotated into the country only in September 1986.⁵³

Geneva VII (Continued) -- July-August 1986 Round

The week long round of talks that began on July 30, 1986, failed to yield any progress on the two key issues that were reported to still divide the negotiators: the time frame for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and measures for monitoring and verifying compliance with the agreement.

According to Pakistan's foreign minister, Yaqub Khan, the sides remained "far apart" on the time frame issue. The U.N. negotiator, Diego Cordovez, while suspending the talks indefinitely, stated that "the process is very much alive and will continue."⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³U.S. Department of State. Afghanistan: Seven Years of Soviet Occupation. Special Report No. 155, Dec. 1986, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁴New York Times, Aug. 9, 1986: 4; The Muslim, Jul. 6, 1986, p. 1, 8.

November 1986 Shuttle

On November 16, 1986, Cordovez undertook a new shuttle trip to the region, stopping in London en-route to brief the British foreign secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, then chairman of the European Economic Community.⁵⁵ Shortly before, on November 5, the U.N. General Assembly voted by 122-20, with 11 abstentions, to demand for the seventh time a withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. The shuttle included consultations in Islamabad, two trips to Kabul and a short visit to Teheran. During the same period, Pakistan's foreign secretary Abdul Sattar visited Moscow, where he held talks with First Deputy Foreign Secretary Yuli Vorontsov and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.⁵⁶ At the end of the shuttle, he announced in Islamabad that the parties had agreed to restart the talks and that "an agreement with regard to effective implementation of the settlement of the issue had also been reached."⁵⁷ According to press reports, the implementation measures agreed upon would include procedures for monitoring both a Soviet withdrawal and the cutoff of aid to the resistance forces based in Pakistan, and would "involve United Nations assistance." Upon his return to New York, on December 9, Cordovez stated that "Now is the first time the only issue remaining is the time frame."⁵⁸

⁵⁵The Muslim, Nov. 16, 1986, p. 1, 8.

⁵⁶FBIS, Daily Report. South Asia. Dec. 11, 1986: F1; The Muslim, Dec. 4, 1986, p. 1, 8.

⁵⁷Muslim, Dec. 4, 1986, p. 1, 8.

⁵⁸New York Times, Dec. 10, 1986.

Unilateral Afghan Initiatives

New questions about Soviet intentions arose as a result of the announcement by the Kabul government in January 1987 of a series of political initiatives. These included a unilateral six-month cease fire, renewed promises of a Soviet withdrawal within an unspecified time frame, and a much publicized effort to draw opponents of the regime, including resistance forces, into a government of "national reconciliation." The moves were variously interpreted as either an effort to expand the political base of the communist government and thereby ensure its survival, or a simple propaganda ploy. In a meeting in Peshawar attended by all major resistance factions, the political leadership of the resistance spurned the initiatives and declared their determination to expel the Soviets and overthrow the PDPA government.⁵⁹

Geneva VII (Continued) -- February-March 1987 Round

The Geneva VII talks reconvened on February 25, 1987, and lasted until March 9. In early February, on the eve of the talks, Pakistan's foreign minister Yaqub Khan twice visited Moscow for discussions in which the Soviets reportedly "renege" on previous statements that the role of the current regime in a future national government was "negotiable." Both Pakistani and U.S. officials insisted that no solution would be acceptable that did not involve political arrangements that would meet with the concurrence of the Afghan "mujahidin" ("warriors for the faith") and would induce the refugees to return home.⁶⁰

⁵⁹New York Times, Jan. 23, 1987: A3.

⁶⁰FEER, Mar. 5, 1987: 42.

At the outset, the atmosphere of the Geneva talks was marred by major Afghan guerrilla offensives in areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, and interdictory or retaliatory air attacks on guerrilla bases and border villages on the Pakistani side of the frontier.⁶¹ A new feature of the fighting was the reported introduction of U.S. made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. Pakistan's foreign minister, Yaqub Khan, officially protested the air attacks, accusing Kabul of "'deliberately aggravating tension and vitiating prospects of the [Geneva] talks.'"⁶²

Despite acrimony over the air attacks, the talks achieved a significant narrowing of positions concerning the timing of a Soviet troop withdrawal.⁶³ In the course of the talks, the recently appointed Afghan foreign minister, Abdul Wakil, reportedly reduced the time frame to 18 months, while Pakistan insisted on 7 months. Reportedly, the discussions also touched for the first time on the issue of the makeup of the government in Kabul following a Soviet withdrawal.⁶⁴ At the end of the talks, Cordovez expressed satisfaction that the gap in the proposed time frames had been narrowed to less than one year.⁶⁵

According to some reports, Cordovez expected that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would use the adjournment interval to conduct further talks among themselves and explore possibilities for an internal political settlement. A number of reports suggested that directly or indirectly the United States, the

⁶¹FEER, April 23, 1987: 40-41.

⁶²FEER, Mar. 12, 1987: 36.

⁶³New York Times, Mar. 3, 1987: A3.

⁶⁴FEER, Apr. 23, 1987: 40-41. On March 2, during a visit to Thailand, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze was reported to have told Thai officials that the Soviet Union was willing to withdraw its troops in 22 months.

⁶⁵New York Times, Mar. 11, 1987: A3.

U.S.S.R., Pakistan and Afghanistan had all made approaches to ex-King Zahir Shah about a possible role in a settlement.⁶⁶

Geneva VII (Continued) -- September 1987 Round

A fourth round of the Geneva VII series, which took place during September 7 and 10, 1987, was held at the unprecedented request of the Soviet and Afghan governments. The round remains somewhat of a mystery to analysts, since contrary to expectations no breakthrough was achieved. In particular, the Afghan side failed to make an anticipated offer to reduce the withdrawal timetable to 12 months, but lowered the figure slightly to 16 months while Pakistan raised its bargaining position from seven to eight months.⁶⁷ Nor did the Soviets mention a reduced time frame in a September 1 meeting in Washington between Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky and Under Secretary of State Michael H. Armacost, or, apparently, in a meeting in Geneva the following week in talks between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian and Yuli Alekseyev, the chief of the Soviet foreign ministry's Middle East department.⁶⁸ Speculation by western diplomatic sources suggested that the failure of the round to achieve progress meant either that it had been requested primarily to influence debate on Afghanistan in the U.N. General Assembly session scheduled for October, or that some breach had developed between the Soviet Union and the Kabul government.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Maleeha Lodhi, *Inching Towards a Historic Compromise*. The Muslim (Islamabad), Mar. 18, 1987: 1; The Economist. Foreign Report, Mar. 12, 1987: 5; FEER, Apr. 23, 1987: 40-41.

⁶⁷Washington Post, Sep. 6, 1987: A29; New York Times, Sep. 11, 1987: A5.

⁶⁸Washington Post, Sep. 6, 1987: A29; *ibid.*, Sep. 11, 1987: 132.

⁶⁹New York Times, Sep. 11, 1987: A3.

Developments Since the September 1987 Talks

Despite the failure of the September 1987 round, diplomatic activity intensified in late 1987 and early 1988. One question that gained increasing attention was that of achieving an internal political settlement. This subject is outside the formal framework on the U.N. talks, but it had long been an article of faith among western analysts that the Soviets would not leave Afghanistan voluntarily until they had satisfied themselves that their interest in assuring a place for the Afghan communists and not having a hostile regime on their doorstep would be protected. The Afghan regime's promotion of "national reconciliation" appeared aimed at achieving an internal accord on favorable terms. Pakistan, while calling an internal settlement a matter for the Afghans themselves, has long supported the necessity of a change of government to insure the voluntary return of the refugees.

In September 1987, Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo said in an interview at the U.N. Assembly session that a United Nations peacekeeping force might maintain "law and order" in the wake of a Soviet withdrawal while a new government was formed that was acceptable to both communists and non-communists, perhaps through the convening of a traditional Loya Jirgah, a grand council of the tribes. Junejo maintained that the Soviet Union "might 'never leave' Afghanistan if" it feared the massacre of its supporters there.⁷⁰

If the Soviets had hoped that their national reconciliation strategy, cease fire offers and Geneva diplomacy might lessen international criticism, they received a serious disappointment at the annual U.N. General Assembly debate of Afghanistan. In November the resolution passed once again, despite a strenuous effort by the Soviets and their allies to amend it, and by the largest margin yet -- 123 to 19, with 11 abstentions.⁷¹ The vote came amidst

⁷⁰New York Times, Sept. 27, 1987: 24.

⁷¹Christian Science Monitor, Nov. 20, 1987: 6.

rumors that the U.N. negotiator, Diego Cordovez, was exploring the possibility of an "all-party" dialogue to include representatives of the Kabul government, the Afghan resistance alliance, and "prominent" exiles.⁷²

The U.S.-Soviet dialogue on Afghanistan intensified with the approach of the December 1987 Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting in Washington. In mid-November discussions between U.S. Under Secretary of State Armacost, and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov, U.S. officials reportedly received "strong hints" that the Soviets were planning to end their involvement in Afghanistan in a 7-12 month time period.⁷³ The Afghanistan issue was discussed in pre-summit talks between Secretary of State George Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, in working level meetings during the summit, and in the Reagan-Gorbachev summit itself. Accounts differed as to how much progress was achieved, and some reports indicated a Soviet effort to portray the U.S. as the main obstacle to a withdrawal through its support of the Afghan resistance.⁷⁴

Starting with the summit, the Soviet stance on an internal settlement began to shift. Under Secretary of State Armacost was quoted as saying that while Gorbachev pressed the issue of a "national reconciliation" government including the PDPA, "the overall conclusion that one would reach from these discussions [was] that the Soviets do not link the withdrawal of their troops to prior resolution of issues of an interim government or transitional arrangements among Afghans."⁷⁵

⁷²Washington Post, Nov. 11, 1987: A31.

⁷³Washington Post, Nov. 20, 1987: 1, A24.

⁷⁴New York Times, Dec. 15, 1987: A8.

⁷⁵FEER, Dec. 24, 1987: 30-31

By late December 1987, progressively less qualified Soviet statements about their intent to quit Afghanistan led to a series of seemingly conflicting U.S. statements about American terms for a settlement. Apparently in response to fears of a "sellout" of the Afghan resistance expressed by conservatives, President Reagan and White House spokesmen first implied that the United States would continue to aid the resistance even after the Soviets started withdrawing their troops. When it was pointed out that this appeared in conflict with the draft agreement, a White House spokesman on December 15 indicated that the beginning of a Soviet withdrawal and the end to U.S. aid to the resistance could occur "at essentially the same time."⁷⁶

At issue was whether an accord would require a cessation of support for the resistance at the same time as the Soviets began a withdrawal, and if so, whether the United States should agree to guarantee such an accord or seek new terms. Critics feared that the Soviets might use the withdrawal period to crush the resistance once the guerrillas own aid was cut off. Others doubted that the Soviets could accomplish during a withdrawal phase what they failed to do in eight years of combat, and criticized the United States for raising new obstacles to an accord.

U.S. officials resisted Soviet efforts to imply finality to the draft agreement. On December 22, Under Secretary of State Armacost, indicated that whether the United States accepted a role as a guarantor would depend on the details of any Soviet withdrawal time table. "We'll have to look at the full [Geneva] agreement, the balance of commitments undertaken, before we are prepared to assume our obligations," he said.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Washington Times, Dec. 16, 1987: 1.

⁷⁷Washington Post, Dec. 22, 1987: A19.

The issue was further joined on January 6, when Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze told an Afghan press agency that the U.S.S.R. "would like the year 1988 to be the last year of the presence of Soviet troops in your country," and that a withdrawal was not dependent on achieving a prior internal political settlement. Shevardnadze acknowledged for the first time that the United States had agreed to cease aiding the Afghan resistance 60 days after an accord was signed. Reportedly, American officials had privately "confirmed that the United States has promised to stop supplying weapons to the rebels as a part of an agreement removing Soviet troops."⁷⁸

Initial reporting characterized Shevardnadze's remarks during a visit to Kabul as intended to put pressure on the communist regime to accept an early withdrawal time frame and at the same time signal the United States of the need to deal with its own political problems arising out of a withdrawal agreement.⁷⁹ U.S. officials sought to keep open issues such as the modalities of a troop withdrawal and cessation of aid to the resistance. The day the Shevardnadze comments were published, Secretary of State Shultz said that a withdrawal agreement should also include a Soviet commitment not to supply arms to the Afghan Army, an issue apparently not covered in the draft accord. Shultz also called for "a firm schedule for withdrawal," and said that the "schedule must be front-end loaded, so that once it starts there's a certain inevitability to it, there's no turning back."⁸⁰

Soviet declarations that a withdrawal would not be dependent on an internal settlement put pressure on Pakistan and the United States to define their terms for an accord. In mid-January 1988, Pakistan's President Zia ul

⁷⁸New York Times, Jan. 7, 1988: A1, A12.

⁷⁹Washington Post, Jan. 3, 1988: A16.

⁸⁰New York Times, Jan. 8, 1988: A1, A8.

Haq said that his government would not sign a peace accord with the regime headed by Najibullah, the current Afghan leader, but only with a coalition government representing all Afghan factions. He implied that only lesser figures in the current government would be acceptable as coalition participants, as the principal leaders were illegitimate by virtue of their association with the Soviet occupation. This position was interpreted by some as a hardened stance from that adopted earlier, but also as aimed at allowing the Soviets to save face while not conferring legitimacy on the present Afghan regime. "The mujahidin have won the war," Zia was quoted as saying. "The Soviet Union has lost. It is only a question of not rubbing it in too hard. The Soviet Union wants a face-saving device, and the mujahidin should offer it to them because the aim should be the vacating of Afghanistan by Soviet troops." Zia still expressed skepticism that the Soviets really intended to withdraw. Nonetheless he stressed the need to test Soviet intentions.⁸¹

On February 8, 1988, Moscow announced via an interruption of regular broadcasting over Soviet television, that it was willing to pull its forces out in 10 months, beginning on May 15. Soviet leader Gorbachev said that the U.S.S.R. had no objection to the U.S. demand for pulling out the bulk of its forces early in the withdrawal period. Gorbachev also indicated that its withdrawal would not be conditional on reaching an internal Afghan political settlement.

The United States cautiously welcomed the announcement, saying it seemed to "take a very good step in the right direction." Reportedly, Under Secretary of State Armacost cancelled a Middle East trip to help prepare Secretary of State Shultz for talks in Moscow.⁸²

⁸¹Washington Post, Jan. 18, 1988: A13, A16.

⁸²Washington Post, Feb. 10, 1988: A1, A26.

On February 9, following a 21-day shuttle to the region during which he claimed to have achieved "virtual agreement" on all facets of an accord, U.N. negotiator Diego Cordovez announced a new round of Geneva talks to begin March 2.

By mid-February the issue of a transitional regime appeared to be the most important policy question, and one on which the United States and Pakistan were not necessarily in agreement. On February 9, a White House spokesman said that an interim regime "could facilitate the withdrawal and subsequent exercise of self-determination by the Afghan people," but left it open as to whether the United States would insist on such an arrangement as a condition for accepting an accord.⁸³ Following a meeting with Secretary of State Shultz on February 17, Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Zain Noorani, reportedly said that the United States "was not adverse to the idea" of a transitional regime, but had not necessarily endorsed it. Reportedly, Secretary Shultz would not take a definite position to meetings in Moscow with Soviet leaders scheduled for February 21 and 22.⁸⁴

The Afghan resistance groups appeared deeply divided over the issue of a coalition regime. The three "traditionalist" parties reportedly favored an international conference to finalize an accord in which the former King Zahir Shah would play a prominent role, while the more fundamentalist parties opposed a role for the former king.⁸⁵ One report said that the Soviets themselves were pursuing the issue of a political settlement with leaders of the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan, an orthodox Islamic party that has close ties to the Afghan fundamentalists.⁸⁶ In late January, however, the chairman of the resistance

⁸³Washington Post, Feb. 10, 1988: A21,26.

⁸⁴Washington Post, Feb. 18, 1988: A18.

⁸⁵FEER, Nov. 19, 1987: 44-46.

⁸⁶FEER, Jan. 21, 1988: 13.

alliance, Yunis Khalis, declared a coalition with remnants of the PDPA regime as "out of the question." An even more militant fundamentalist leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, stated "We do not expect our Moslem brothers in Pakistan to ask us to share power with Soviet puppets." Finally, the leader of Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami publicly stated that the Soviets would have to conclude a deal directly with the Afghan mujahidin and should not try to conclude an agreement over their heads.⁸⁷

As of mid-February the Afghan resistance leaders were vowing to continue fighting if an accord provided any role for the PDPA. Reportedly, a Pakistani official stated that the resistance leaders would soon announce their own proposal for a successor government to be composed of representatives of the seven parties of the Afghan resistance alliance, commanders within Afghanistan, Afghans living abroad and possibly some noncommunists from the present government.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Washington Post, Jan. 18, 1988: A13, A16.

⁸⁸Washington Post, Feb. 18, 1988: A18.